

Back to the Gold Rush

By: Trace Galascione

As time goes back, I step into the wilderness of California in 1848. I am dressed in jeans, a simple black shirt, sturdy boots, and a cowboy hat. I look every bit the part of an adventurer. Over my shoulder, a pickaxe shines in the sunlight, and a well worn leather backpack hangs heavily against my back.

Inside the backpack are items to help and protect me. I have gold coins, very useful even in the past, connecting me to my time and this one. Alongside me is my six-shooter pistol and a box of bullets, essential things for my protection in a land where law and order are often outmatched by chaos and greed. A mining pan and a canteen help me seek fortune and help me in this harsh environment. Completing my things are a flint and steel for fire-starting, a bayonet knife for multiple uses, and a hammock for my comfort in the wild.

The air is thick with anticipation as I step into the world of 1848. A time when thousands flocked to California with dreams of becoming rich. My modern day apparel draws curious glances from rough miners, but the sight of my pickaxe and mining pan assures them of my shared purpose. I find a spot by a river, its waters promising gold beneath the surface.

Setting up camp, I pull out the mining pan and crouch by the riverbank. The repetitive swirl of water and sediment soon becomes a meditative rhythm. With each swirl, the heavier gold settles at the bottom of the pan. Hours pass, and my persistence is rewarded with tiny nuggets of gold, each one a testament to my efforts and the rich promise of California.

When dusk falls, I know it's time to prepare for the night. I select a nearby tree and expertly tie my hammock between its sturdy branches. The flint and steel come next, sparking a

fire, providing warmth and protection against the darkness. The bayonet knife, sharp and reliable, is kept within my arm's reach, ready to defend against any threats.

As I lie in the hammock, the sounds of the night surround me. Crickets chirping, the distant howl of a wolf, and the gentle rustle of the river. I drift into sleep, my dreams filled with thoughts of the riches that await.

Morning breaks with the sun's first light piercing through the trees. I get up, stretching my muscles before securing my belongings. My canteen, filled from the river, hangs from my belt as I walk farther into the wilderness. Along the way, I encounter other people, filled with both hope and desperation. I exchange a few gold coins for information about the best panning spots, understanding that even in this land, a little goodwill can go a long way.

Days turn into weeks as my routine becomes second nature. My stash of gold grows daily, each nugget adding to his future wealth. The six-shooter pistol remains my companion, its presence stops those who might consider me an easy target. Here in California, trust is earned slowly, and I know better than to let my guard down.

One evening, as I sleep by the fire, a group of men approach. They are tired, eyes scanning my camp with the look of people who see a chance to steal. The leader, a tall man with a scar running down his cheek, speaks first. "Evenin', stranger. Looks like you've had some luck." I nod, my hand resting casually near my pistol. "What brings you out this way?" The leader smiles, "Heard there's gold in these parts. Thought we'd see for ourselves."

I understand the unspoken challenge. In this world, strength and readiness are currency. I reach into my backpack and pull out a small nugget of gold, tossing it over. "There's more where that came from. But the river's wide enough for all of us."

The leader catches the nugget, inspecting it closely before nodding. “Fair enough. We’ll be on our way, then.”

The tension eases as the group moves on, leaving me to my fire and thoughts. I know the encounter could have ended differently, and silently thank my foresight in bringing both gold coins and a means to protect them.

Weeks turn into months, my stash of gold now big. I reflect on the journey, the hardships, and the triumphs. My bayonet, once a mere tool, has carved through more than just food. It has shaped his path to survival. My hammock, really just a simple piece of fabric, has provided countless nights of restful sleep, a peaceful place in the unpredictable wilderness.

One day, I decide it’s time to return to my own time. I pack my belongings carefully, ensuring my gold is secure. My six-shooter pistol, now a trusted ally, is tucked safely into my belt. With a final look at the river that has given me so much, I step into the time machine again.

Emerging in the present day, I feel a rush of relief and accomplishment. I am back in my time, but I have the memories of those who did the California Gold Rush. My jeans, now worn and dusty, tell the story of my journey, while my backpack remains heavy with gold and memories.

The gold coins I brought with me are now more than just currency; they are memories of old California. As I exchange them for money, I know their true value goes beyond their weight. They represent a connection to history.

In the end, my journey to 1848 was more than just a quest for gold. It was a test of endurance, a lesson in resourcefulness, and a reminder of the drive for discovery and fortune. I return not only richer in material wealth but also in experience and perspective.

As I get back into modern life I find myself remembering 1848. The harsh landscapes, the rivalry of fellow gold rush guys, and the joy of doing something myself are forever on my mind. I know that the lessons learned in old California will stay with me forever, guiding me forever.

And so, with a heart full of gratitude and pockets filled with gold, I step into the future, ready to face whatever challenges and opportunities come my way. The spirit of the Gold Rush lives on with me.